



Leadershift

Reinventing Leadership for the Age of Mass Collaboration

THE SUMMARY IN BRIEF

The age of mass collaboration is challenging the very nature of leadership, yet it also offers unprecedented value for leaders who know how to lead in this new environment. *Leadershift* describes how to adapt traditional leadership roles, and presents the tools necessary to embrace and succeed in this new age. It offers a new business model that will allow leaders to engage successfully with communities, recognize and develop talent, and win customer loyalty.

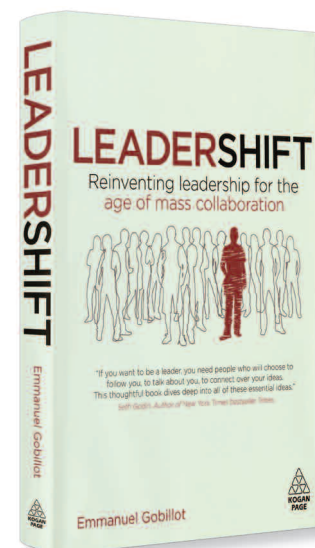
For decades, leaders have been told that success depends on experience, expertise, efforts and power. But, today, four critical trends are making these variables irrelevant: the demographic trend, the expertise trend, the attention trend and the democratic trend. These critical trends are turning the world of work on its head. When people work collectively, there is no rulebook. The time has come for leaders to question every move.

Leadershift explores the world of mass collaboration — the collective actions of large numbers of people working independently of organizations — and what it means for leaders.

Using examples and ideas from a number of fields, author Emmanuel Gobillot rewrites the rules of leadership. His conclusion is as stark as his solutions are practical — adjust your mindset or become irrelevant.

IN THIS SUMMARY, YOU WILL LEARN:

- Who makes the decisions in a virtual world.
- How an online community effects change.
- What social networking means for the way we solve problems.
- What the online world can teach us about the offline one.
- How mass collaboration will change the way you lead.



by Emmanuel Gobillot

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THE COMPLETE SUMMARY: LEADERSHIFT

by Emmanuel Gobillot

The author: For more than 10 years, Emmanuel Gobillot has advised senior executives on leadership and organization effectiveness issues. One of Europe's most sought after leadership speakers, he has delivered keynote addresses around the world. He is also the author of the bestseller *The Connected Leader*.

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Introduction

The social, collaborative and virtual networking phenomena have far deeper implications than just changing the way we do business. They are changing business itself. Business is no longer hierarchical (as it still remains in the main today) nor is it personal (as we were keen to suggest in the 1990s). Mass participation makes business social. Mass collaboration makes it communal. This is changing the nature of roles.

While sought and welcomed, leadership in communities is intrinsically linked to narrative, task and contribution rather than power, role and accountability. Therefore, by understanding the communal landscape we can understand the nature of the leadership requirements and start to develop new models of leadership effectiveness.

Mass Participation

Leading in mass participation requires us to don our Indiana Jones hats and become social anthropologists, focusing on the communities that are created, rather than the psychology of any one individual who contributes to one or more of them. Mass collaboration is indeed a herd phenomenon where focusing on the masses pays off.

The aim of leadership will always be to secure engagement, alignment, accountability and commitment. What is changing is the way in which we will achieve these. ●

The Day of Reckoning

Every challenge we face is met with a call for leadership. We have a thirst for people who can meet the only test of leadership — make us feel stronger and more

capable. Our value and, ultimately, our survival as leaders, reside in our ability to meet the challenges dictated by four fundamental trends that make up mass collaboration. The real difficulty will be our ability to shift our emphasis when some of the things around us remain the same. The real challenge of mass collaboration is that it is practiced with tools that do not necessarily facilitate it.

Engaging in conversations that will help leaders paint a viscerally desired picture of the future is the way we will get over our reluctance to change. Of course, it will be a challenge to adjust our behavior when most of the structures and systems we operate under reinforce the status quo. But it is a challenge we must face, for if we don't, taken together, these trends spell the potential death of leadership — literally. We must face the four trends that create the acronym DEAD:

- **The Demographic trend, which will make your experience irrelevant.** Multiple generations, with multiple socio-cultural backgrounds, are now working alongside each other. Each brings with it its own hopes, fears, expectations and experiences, which the others don't understand and cannot relate to.
- **The Expertise trend, which will make your knowledge irrelevant.** The expertise that drives organizational value increasingly resides in a network of relationships outside the managerial reach of the organization.
- **The Attention trend, which will make your efforts irrelevant.** A collection of social and informational networks is coming to replace organizations as a source of coherence and cohesion for stakeholders.
- **The Democratic trend, which will make your power irrelevant.** Consultants, interims, dotted



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line reports, part-time employees, casual labor and networks of associates have acquired an equal voice at the organizational table, outside a leader's span of control.

These shifts cannot be stopped. But they are not to be feared as they offer leaders new, efficient and effective sources of value generation. ●

The Demographic Trend

Two elements make up the demographic trend. The first element is the never-ending war for talent and, in particular, a new front opening in that war — the battle for leaders.

While it is unlikely that the demand for leaders will decline, it is certain that a healthy supply pipeline is necessary if you consider that 50 percent to 75 percent of senior managers will be eligible for retirement by 2010. Replacing them is critical. It will require a fundamental rethink of leadership development.

The Clash of Experience

The second of the two elements that make up the demographic trend is the clash of experience.

Think about it this way: What we learn shapes our experience, which, in turn, informs the way we lead. Leaders are the products of their pasts. Their behavior and, as a result, the type of leadership they offer is a combination of who they are as people and the situations they find themselves in. As geographical and socio-cultural differences enter the workplace at an unprecedented rate to fill the leadership gap, fewer people will be able to relate to their leaders' demands. This difference of experience, when viewed through an organizational lens, quickly becomes a clash of experience.

No longer can leaders' experience help them comprehend others; nor can others' experience help them understand the leadership leaders seek to provide. As this trend continues, a leader's experience runs the risk of becoming irrelevant, if not altogether counterproductive. This problem is compounded by the fact that along with socio-cultural differences, we are also experiencing generational trends in organizations.

Generation Me

Thirteen years after she first started to research generational differences, Jean M. Twenge published *Generation Me*, which, to date, has to be the most thorough exploration of the Generation Y phenomenon.

Twenge had enough data to look at the behaviors of students of the same age throughout the 1950s, '60s,

The Role of the Leader

The role of the leader is to foster an environment where the conditions are right to attract a thriving community. Leaders must shift their emphasis to the fostering of social engagement by valuing conversations that they otherwise might have deemed wasteful and inefficient. To be worth following, leaders will need to work primarily on the contributions they make, rather than the direction they give, to the community. This requires them to develop enough executive maturity (i.e. being comfortable in their own skin) to be able to see mass participation as an opportunity to create value rather than a threat to their existence.

'70s, '80s and '90s. Armed with enough data points to make a pointillist pale with envy, Twenge exposed the real differences between generations.

This new generation, brought up with an idea of entitlement and an unrealistic sense of possibilities, is less likely to accept your leadership than any generation in the past. Having discovered that their dreams are unlikely to become reality, members of this generation are also more depressed and unfulfilled than their older siblings. Imagine a workplace where you have up to three generations from numerous continents with multiple socio-cultural backgrounds working alongside each other.

This demographic trend means that leaders will no longer be able to rely on their experience to lead. ●

The Expertise Trend

Today's technology is putting the world of co-creation on steroids. What has become known as "distributed co-creation" — the bringing together of talent from numerous sources outside the organizational boundaries — is only in its infancy but is growing at an exponential rate.

Threadless, the company behind the T-shirt that reads "This was supposed to be the future so where is my jet pack?" relies on its users' community to generate designs that other members vote on and eventually purchase.

Distributed Co-Creation

Open source software was perhaps the best-known precursor to the developing movement. As more companies reconfigure their supply chain to rely on expertise beyond their organizational walls, they will increasingly

come to rely on a happy band of amateur experts (many call them “prosumers,” for professional consumers). Already, while traditional Web sites are growing by about 20 percent a year, user-generated media sites are growing at about 100 percent a year.

The drive for co-creation illustrated by user-generated content is relentless. The often quoted example of Wikipedia, which in fewer than seven years has grown to be the world’s biggest encyclopedia with more than 6 million articles in more than 250 languages, is but the tip of the iceberg. The very act of creating a product or service is no longer the preserve of a closed organizational system of experts. As the world reconfigures the make-up of expertise, that of individual leaders could become irrelevant. ●

The Attention Trend

As human beings, we are bombarded by messages and information. Unable to make sense of them all, we look to communities to help us focus. We rely on a few brands. We read only a couple of newspapers. We follow the same blogs. This selectiveness is our way of cutting through the information clutter and the demands on our attention.

While organizations used to form part of that network of attention, a collection of social and informational networks is coming to replace them as a source of coherence and cohesion for people. The reason is simple: They replicate more closely the way we seek engagement than organizations have been able to achieve through their narrow focus on roles, rules and economic incentives, rather than on individuals and their sense of moral and social obligations.

Wasted Effort

As leaders, our role is not only to get people to do something, it is to get them to do more than they thought possible. We want them to allocate their discretionary effort to our cause. Our reliance on roles, rules and economic incentives to achieve these ends has been to the detriment of the moral and social obligations that make us release that discretionary effort. That in itself would not be a problem if we had nowhere else to turn. But, as technology enables the creation of much more targeted communal experience in a way organizations could never replicate, the efforts put in by leaders to win the fight for attention will be largely wasted.

Faced with this trend, some organizations are multiplying their communication efforts. They try (some-

times successfully) to use new channels to reach us. But what the attention trend demonstrates is not so much that we need to be more intelligent and credible about where we find people but, much more importantly, it will shape what we say to them once we have found a place where they might listen. ●

The Democratic Trend

Ikea requires you to adopt as many different roles as there are stages in the somewhat schizophrenic experience of Ikea shopping. You are the interior designer arranging products together. You are the consumer savoring your meatballs. You become the storeroom picker carrying your goods, prior to acting as the transport manager loading stuff into the car.

We are facing the “Ikeazation” of our world. Our economies are starting to look like giant Ikea stores where people go from one role to another depending on their skills, passions — and ultimately demand. The idea that there are such things as employees or customers no longer satisfactorily represents the complexity of the economic activity.

A Complex System of Relationships

An organization is now a complex system of relationships most of which sit outside a leader’s span of control.

In the democratic world, leaders are no longer an accident of birth. We can choose whom we follow. We even get to vote whenever we want. In this world, the leader never gets to call the election.

Devoid of positional power, leaders need to find a new way of engaging people. When the social, intellectual and informational capital of an organization no longer sits inside a leader’s span of control, democracy takes over.

The Death of Leadership as We Know It

These four trends foretell a world where relationships between followers and leaders will need to be different from what they are today if they are to be productive. Yet, for every worrying facet of change there are opportunities. While this work is making the way we lead today irrelevant, it is also a world crying out for leadership. Taken together, the demographic, expertise, attention and democratic trends spell the death of leadership as we know it, but they do not altogether make the practice of leadership redundant. Our challenge is to understand the communities that will form the new business landscape and the way they are best engaged for the delivery of an economic objective. ●

Pay or Play?

The demographic trend coupled with the attention shift creates a direct threat to control. You cannot control what you do not understand or what doesn't want to be controlled.

The combination of the expertise trend and the democratic trend means that the legitimacy of structures (which relies on either knowledge or willing adoption of roles, and preferably both) is no longer present. The rejection of current organizational forms forced by the demographic and attention trends mixed with the loss of leaders' positional power as a result of the democratic and expertise trends threatens the order necessary for success.

Two Insights

The four trends indicate that the coordination of activities we have so far achieved through hierarchical means is not efficient and that the means through which we achieve coordination will need to change. There are two insights we can gain from the trends themselves.

The first is that the coercion of individuals toward an organizational cause (however cleverly articulated and positively intended) is not sustainable. Commitment cannot be engineered. The "Ikeazation" of the economy demands a "build it and they will come" mindset rather than a "lie cleverly and they will buy" capability. Communities do indeed self-regulate, even without centralized control. A complex interaction between transactional involvement and social engagement emerges, which no organization can or should try to regulate.

The second is that the very tools used to create the coordination of activities and the engagement of resources have had their legitimacy rooted in the institutional character of the organization. As these institutions cannot survive, we will need to find a new set of tools.

Beyond Leadership

The trends are changing the way organizations create. The new units of analysis are not organizations (in the sense of structurally organized), but rather companies (as in groups of companions). Does that mean that leadership will be irrelevant? Are we going toward some anarchical, communal days where no one is in charge (with the associated chaos we have all been taught to fear anarchy leads to)? Well, the way we have led might be irrelevant but this is not true of leadership altogether. We are living beyond the days of leadership. ●

Leadershift

"Leadershift" is about facilitating a community's engagement need. It is that new "leadershift" modus operandi that is defined as:

A type of leadership, non-hierarchical in form, that facilitates the collaboration of a self-selected group, of which the leader is an integral part, in the generation of a narrative that builds and sustains a valuable and co-created outcome.

Blurring the Boundaries

Where "leadershift" differs from leadership is in its search for a truly dynamic, social and co-created form of leadership. This is leadership that blurs the boundaries between leader and follower and places the importance of culture facilitation over that of strategy articulation as the central focus of its efforts.

"Leadershift" actions and behaviors are only legitimate in so far as they are mandated by the community itself. To make a call because no one else can make it is only directive if the community never recognized you as being able to make the call. When the community asks you to arbitrate its decisions, a directive style becomes a helpful style.

Leadership vs. 'Leadershift'

In "leadershift," reputation rather than position makes the leader. What creates a reputation is the commitment the leader has shown to the community rather than the effectiveness by which they have made it work for their benefit. That kind of power is interdependent. The leader is only as strong as the community and the community becomes stronger through the actions of its leader. The difference between current organizational positional power and this communal, social power is that both parties need to agree and have the ability to review the contract. ●

Shift 1 — From Clarity to Simplicity

Simplicity is about realigning participants' intellectual and emotional outlooks. It is a combination of two elements: simplification and coherence.

A leader must learn to distinguish between what matters and what doesn't to the engagement of a community. Our simplification reflexes have become so sharp that, in our search for efficiency, we risk eradicating some important elements of the community's strength.

We have all witnessed how changes in processes and structure (even if as a result these are becoming simpler)

tend to decrease, rather than increase, levels of understanding. We have all seen employees trying to figure out who and what matters once a new structure is announced. So, while the simplification process is a worthwhile thing to do, it is not the only thing that matters to increasing engagement. What we ignore when we put our focus solely on simplification is the interplay between simplification and our second element of simplicity — coherence.

Coherence

Coherence is the ability to highlight the interdependence of a system (e.g. a car is a complicated system of parts, but a coherent mode of transport).

The role of the leader must be to deploy strategies that can help bring different elements together to build a coherent whole. The leader becomes a primary agent in helping the community stage discussions on what it stands for. The role of leadership is to help communities articulate the problem they are looking to solve.

What is important to us, as leaders, is not only that people choose our network to invest their time, money and efforts, but that they do so in a way that is beneficial to the organization. We call it alignment. Without it we fear that, instead of getting people involved in a concerted co-creation effort focused in one direction, we may end up with a multitude of unfocused, wasted enthusiasm. ●

Shift 2 — From Plans to Narratives

If simplicity is about generating the energy that propels a community forward, then narrative is the vector that helps that community move on a coherent path. A narrative helps that community in two ways. First, it clarifies the role of mass collaboration in a business, and second it helps participants align their actions to the delivery of value.

The second building block to any organizational effort, after engagement, is alignment. Leaders must answer two critical questions:

- *How do I ensure that community members understand their involvement in the social process (i.e. how do they best contribute)?*
- *How do I make sure that people stay aligned behind the mission?*

Both of these are normally answered with a plan. But as plans will invariably become obsolete in the face of change, it is better to have a community able to make sense of the evolving environment and respond appro-

priately to changes. This is achieved through narrative environments that enable free exploration of options while retaining an intact notion of the overall mission.

The role of the leader is to facilitate the narrative — helping participants and the community define who they are, what they aspire to and how they hope to get there.

Tone

The role of the leader is not to design plans, but to help the organization construct a narrative by nurturing the narrative environment. It sounds a bit more woolly but it's much more effective. Nurturing a narrative environment is about helping the organization acquire a tone.

The tone of the organization is the type of story it will tell. Is the story of your department, your function, your organization one of conflict or is it a story of change and cooperation? To nurture a tone forces a leader to understand the key moments in organizational life and frame these in a way that clarifies their significance. ●

Shift 3 — From Roles to Tasks

It is not for leaders to struggle to reconcile the conflict between the organizational role and the individual's self-image. What the leader is there to do is facilitate the creation of coherence by letting community members create that logic for themselves while reinforcing the need of the community. The best way to do this is to focus on clear task definition.

At this stage in the argument we should have already secured both the engagement and the alignment of any member of the community. We have the simplicity and the narrative we need to transform the organization in a company. Tasks are the critical incidents that move the narrative along. Of course, there is no denying that the organization needs roles; after all, roles are its foundations. However, the reinforcement of the social roles of individuals born out of their self-image can only be accomplished through tasks. Therefore, it is a change of emphasis in a leader's dialogue that needs to take place.

When tasks are well defined, time bound and necessary, they form the words in the company's narrative.

Two Types of Tasks

The fact is that in order to fulfill their self-image, people will choose to complete tasks that make the community sustainable. Some of these will be what we may want to call accountability tasks (i.e. going to the immediate fulfillment of the organizational purpose) while others might be best described as maintenance tasks (i.e. tasks that are contributory to

the fulfillment of accountability tasks).

It is crucial to understand that, in mass collaboration, the leader's time is better spent helping individuals find the opportunities to reinforce their self-image while preventing the organizational roles derailing their strengths. The reality is that no one who truly loves what they do will ever reject the accountabilities necessary for their commitment to the company's success and sustainability. ●

Shift 4 — From Money to Love

When leaders ask for commitment, what they are asking for is devotion to the organization. They look for people who will join the organization with the aim of staying and caring enough about it to ensure that their contribution is maximized.

Commitment is about putting the organization first. In practice, it means staying as long and working as hard as is needed for a task to be accomplished. It means showing flexibility to take any extra steps, whether planned or not, to ensure expectations are exceeded. Underlying these demands are two distinct ideas that define commitment.

Showing Dedication

The first is that commitment is about making a pledge to conduct a specific undertaking. Being committed, whether in our private or in our work lives, is about showing dedication. To be real, a commitment needs to be made.

The second idea underpinning the notion of commitment is the idea of obligation. A commitment is a felt obligation to do something irrespective of how much we may want to do something else. This is a critical idea as it leads to the sustainability of the relationship and highlights the fact that commitment and engagement go hand in hand. For commitment to exist, both parties have to willingly relinquish some of their freedom to act.

Commitment Cannot Be Bought

To secure commitment, leaders must look at their organizations through two new, non-financial lenses.

The first lens is to realize that both parties involved in the relationship have to love what they do. To be successful the organization needs all involved to embrace their tasks and identify themselves with the narrative.

The second lens is that a social, rather than economic, incentive can be created by focusing on the community rather than the individual. What matters to the functioning of our communities is not what motivates individuals but rather that they direct that motivation to making the community stronger. ●

Love Enters the Corporate Consciousness

In the late '90s, Daniel Goleman published a book that would popularize the term "emotional intelligence." The basic premise of emotional intelligence is that to be successful, leaders need to both understand and manage their emotions so as not to derail their intent.

In 2002, Tim Sanders released his first book, boldly titled *Love Is the Killer App*. In it, he argues that business success depends on three key factors: knowledge, networking and compassion. He goes on to show how, by becoming "lovecats" (sharing knowledge, becoming a business match-maker and building people up), anyone can achieve the impossible.

The year 2005 gave us "Lovemarks," the new marketing technique introduced to the world by charismatic Worldwide CEO of Saatchi & Saatchi, Kevin Roberts. Following Sanders' example, he introduced another three-dimensional model, suggesting that by using Mystery (i.e. great inspiring stories), Sensuality (appealing to all the senses) and Intimacy (showing empathy and passion) organizations can do something that fads and brands can never sustain — command both respect and love.

The Elvis Fallacy

In 2002, Junkie XL remixed a song first recorded by Elvis Presley in 1968 and used in one of his movies, *Live a Little, Love a Little*. The single went straight to No.1 in more than 20 countries. "A Little Less Conversation" became an anthem that was used in the soundtracks of movies from *Bruce Almighty* to *Ocean's 13*.

It also became a favorite line for journalists and commentators to use every time they were dissatisfied. Politicians of all persuasions were asked for "a little less conversation and a little more action." Executives spanning the entire economic spectrum from the health to the financial sectors were directed to have "a little less conversation and take a little more action."

But if journalists saw the resurgence of the song as an opportunity to capitalize temporarily on its popularity, business leaders should have recognized it as the best articulation of one of their most entrenched and mistaken beliefs — actions speak louder than words.

Social Engagement Is Not a Sequential Process

That executives have harbored that belief is not surprising — transactional involvement is built on actions. Create clarity, communicate a plan, hold people accountable and reward appropriate outcomes. The sequential nature of the process reinforces the belief that doing something to others is the one sure way to succeed. On the other hand, social engagement, as we have seen, is not a sequential process.

Simplicity, narratives, tasks and love reinforce each other. So, at the very least, the “doing” part of leadership needs to be more complex, more refined, more interconnected and more holistic. But the fallacy that organizations suffer from a “little too much conversation and not enough action syndrome” does not simply rest on misguided beliefs about the type of actions to take. It is born out of a failure to accept that words and actions are, in fact, intrinsically linked. There are two important aspects to this.

Words Predict Actions

The first is that words can pretty much predict the nature of the actions to be taken.

We know that our moods are contagious. We can feel how the atmosphere in our workplace changes as the mood changes. This happens because of the words we use and the attitudes we display. Clearly, our words and our actions, and, by extension, the actions of others, are not disconnected in the way conventional managerial wisdom would have it. Words speak at least as loudly as actions.

The second element we need to consider in order to put the fallacy to rest is our belief that actions and conversations exist on two separate continua. The fact is that there cannot be efficient actions without effective conversations.

Breaking the “Elvis Fallacy” requires us to start by valuing what we have and, together, imagining and designing what we are imaginative enough to envisage.

Simplicity, Narratives, Tasks and Love

There are four steps that will prove crucial in developing the strengths and resilience leaders will need to foster simplicity, narratives, tasks and love in their organizations.

The first is to learn to do nothing. The focus of “leadershift” is not on what to start or do but rather what to stop.

The second step is to contribute to the narrative. Narrative ownership is distributed through the system rather than owned by the leader, so while it is legitimate (and recommended) for the leader to contribute, that

contribution is in no way superior to the contribution of others (unless made as a result of a demand on the leader by the community).

The third is to build personal reputation. To be able to navigate through the mass collaboration effort, leaders need to have a solid reputation. While reputation is underpinned by an individual’s behavior and capabilities, it is ultimately accorded by community members.

Finally, the last step is learn to love what you do. If we refocus away from role to task and learn to embrace our strengths and passions rather than our measured contribution it is likely that we will find more energy. ●

Concluding Thoughts

In his book *Wind, Sand and Stars*, author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry wrote, “What saves a man is to take a step. Then another step. It is always the same step, but you have to take it.”

The DEAD trends do *not*, in any way, diminish our yearning for leadership. We want to follow. We want to be inspired. We want to be led. This is not because we are weak or paralyzed by fear, nor because of some deficiency that leaders need to fix. Instead, it is because we want someone to typify the changes we wish to make. We want someone to be the figurehead of a movement we want to drive.

The ultimate leadership challenge is not the erosion of the powers and tools thrust upon us by a turbulent environment. It is our ability to take Saint-Exupéry’s first step. We cannot second-guess the future. There is no point looking for a truth that will answer all our concerns. It is not out there. Our job as leaders is to take the first step, without trying to second-guess or fearing what might lie ahead. Our future lies in our ability to march proudly into the future, at some times leaders and at others followers, working together, building on each others’ strengths. ●

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

If you liked *Leadershift*, you’ll also like:

1. ***The Accountable Leader* by Brian Dive.** Centered around three themes — leadership, accountability and organizational structure — this book explores what it means for managers to be held accountable at every level, and argues that most problems on the job result from lack of accountability.
2. ***Put the Moose on the Table* by Randall Tobias with Todd Tobias.** The former CEO of Eli Lilly and Co. shares his approach to leadership. He talks at length on values, empowerment, success and integrity.
3. ***Leaders at All Levels* by Ram Charan.** Charan takes aim at the current crisis in leadership by offering a new model for succession and development.